

**REMARKS**

The heading of the abstract section has been amended to read "Abstract of the Disclosure," as requested by the Examiner.

The Examiner indicates that claims 11-15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, claims 1 to 10 have been canceled, and claim 11 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 1 and 11 as filed. Claim 14 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 1 and 14 as filed. Claim 16 has been amended to depend on amended claim 11. Claims 12 and 13 have been amended to restate the defined subject matter. In compliance with 37 C.F.R. §121(c)(3), a clean version of the entire set of pending claims is being submitted, as is a marked-up version showing changes in the amended claims 11-14 and 16 relative to the previous version of the claims.

New claims 17 to 45 are also presented for prosecution. New claims 17 to 21 are dependent upon allowed claim 11. New independent claim 22 defines a tool comprising first and second instruments including respective first and second handles that mate to form a composite handle and at least one of the first handle and second handle comprises material that indicates whether at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized. Associated new dependent claims 23 to 45 are added. These new claims are believed to define patentable subject matter.

Claims 11 to 45 remain in the application. Of these, claims 11, 14 and 22 are independent claims.

Serial No. 09/421,635  
Amendment A

Allowance of claims 11 to 45 is respectfully requested.

The Examiner's attention is directed to the following copending related case (owned by the assignee of the instant application), which is directed to a hand-held instrument: United States Patent Application Serial No. 09/014,229, filed January 27, 1998, and entitled "A Slip Fit Handle for Hand-Held Instruments that Access Interior Body Regions," pending before Examiner J. Woo (Art Unit 3731). The Information Disclosure Statement that accompanies this Amendment seeks to assure a cross-citation of documents between this and the copending related case. The Examiner's attention is also directed to design patents US D439,980 and US D449,691 (also listed in the Information Disclosure Statement), which are owned by the assignee of the instant application and are directed to Hand-Held Surgical Instruments.

Respectfully submitted,

By

  
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